

The Cabot and Lodge Family, Supporters of America's Biggest Foreign Policy Disasters - How John Kennedy Came To The Senate - And Why He Had To Be Removed From Office

The [War of 1812](#) and the [Vietnam War](#) were 150 years apart, but the Cabot and Lodge Family managed to be intimately involved in both. The Cabot - Lodge family also was instrumental in the biggest foreign policy disaster in United States history, its failure to join the League of Nations which is now considered the proximate cause of World War II.

The Cabots and the Lodges are famous Boston merchant families. Staunch Federalists in the early days of the republic, their names are synonymous with eastern establishment Republicanism in modern times.

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., was defeated for re-election to the Senate by John F. Kennedy in 1952. Eisenhower, one of the greatest presidents, was at the head of the ticket and taking the nation by storm. Yet, Ike's coattails were not long enough to carry Lodge to victory, which is especially ironic given that Lodge was one of the major promoters of Eisenhower's nomination and election. As a consolation prize, Lodge was appointed Ambassador to the United Nations, a higher office than Senator.

Kennedy defeated Lodge in 1952. Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, a Kennedy friend who was elected to Kennedy's House seat when JFK went to the Senate and who later became Speaker of the House of Representatives, wrote that the 1952 Kennedy - Lodge race was memorably dirty and unethical. [See *Man of the House*, by Thomas P. O'Neill] When O'Neill retired from the House, his place was taken by Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., Robert Kennedy's son and President Kennedy's nephew. After JFK was elected President, when his brother Edward M. Kennedy was elected to fill out the remaining two years of the unexpired term, his opponent in the 1962 November General Election was George Cabot Lodge, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.'s nephew. And the Kennedys and Lodges would meet again in the 1960 presidential election, when Richard Nixon picked Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. to be his Vice-Presidential running mate. A tin ear for foreign policy was the historic force that enabled the Kennedy family to supplant the Cabot - Lodge family as the preeminent Massachusetts political dynasty?

Politics makes strange bedfellows. After defeating him for the Senate, and for Vice-President Kennedy went on to appoint Lodge United States Ambassador to [Vietnam](#) in 1963, when [Vietnam](#) was becoming a difficult domestic political problem for Kennedy. Support for Diem, a Roman Catholic dictator in a predominantly Buddhist nation, was an acute embarrassment for the first Catholic president of the United States. Why Lodge allowed himself to be used as cover for Kennedy's biggest foreign policy problem is still a mystery.

Lodge was intimately involved in secret negotiations with a group of dissident generals which resulted in the overthrow and murder of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. During these negotiations, Lodge secretly communicated with President Kennedy, circumventing the normal State Department and Pentagon channels. [See *The Storm Has Many Eyes*, by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. p. 212] General Paul D. Harkins, the commanding American General in the theater and who was against withdrawing support from Diem, was not kept informed of the actions of Lodge, the American ambassador, or Kennedy, the Commander-in-Chief. Ironically, Harkins, like Lodge and Kennedy, came from Massachusetts. This was a very narrow and parochial political base on which to rest the biggest foreign policy problem of the administration. The heads of the three major government branches: President, State Department and military were all held by people from Massachusetts where the Vietnam problem was concerned. The important point is that Kennedy, the Commander-in-Chief, was keeping secrets from his own commanding General in the field.

Overthrowing a foreign head of state is normally considered an act of war, even if that head of state is a friend. President Diem was considered America's staunchest ally in Asia. From the moment of his overthrow, the United States had no choice but to become an active belligerent in the [Vietnam War](#). Overthrowing a head of state is a revolutionary act designed to take control of a country. By helping to overthrow Diem, the United States was taking over South [Vietnam](#). Kennedy himself was overthrown three weeks later. Why? The answer is clear. For Kennedy to have resigned, as Nixon did 11 years later, would have been an admission that the United States conspired to overthrow its best friend. The needs of deniability precluded resignation, so his removal from office required assassination.

The United States needed to show that the policy of helping to overthrow your best friend and ally was the policy of the Kennedy Administration alone and not the policy of the United States government. Why would anyone trust the United States, or want to be its friend, if it goes around the world betraying its friends? Kennedy had to go, or else the United States would have found itself, not the leader of the free world, but a pariah and an outcast. This can be proved by the timing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which constituted the legal basis for sending United States combat troops to [Vietnam](#).

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed in August 1964, in the waning days of Johnson's caretaker administration, before he was nominated for president in his own right. The Gulf of Tonkin incidents are widely acknowledged today to have been fabricated. What was the urgency of creating the legal basis for intervention in Vietnam, especially when that authority would not be used for another six months? President Johnson, the consummate political animal, was anxious to put the responsibility for [Vietnam](#) on Kennedy's watch, not his own.

Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.'s grandfather, Henry Cabot Lodge served six years in the House of Representatives and as Senator from Massachusetts for almost 30 years, from 1893 to 1924. In those days, Senators were appointed to office by the state legislature. Ironically, when Henry Cabot Lodge first faced the voters in 1916, the male voters only, his opponent was none other than John F. Fitzgerald, the maternal grandfather of the man who would defeat his own grandson for that Senate seat 36 years later.

Henry Cabot Lodge is best known to history as the Senate majority leader and chairman of the Senate Foreign relations Committee who led the effort to prevent ratification of the League of Nations Treaty, thereby effectively keeping the United States out of the League. According to many historians, American absence from the League left it impotent when the militarists started their wars of aggression in the 1920's and '30's.

Theodore Roosevelt actually suggested that Henry Cabot Lodge be nominated for president during the 1916 Republican Convention. Four years later, Lodge was permanent chairman of the 1920 Republican Convention. It was Henry Cabot Lodge's position as a Republican leader that gave him the power and made him oppose the League of Nations. Elementary election analysis would have revealed that he was not a popular Senator.

When Lodge was elected to the Senate in 1916, Republicans won half the seats. Lodge defeated Kennedy's grandfather 51.5% to 45.3%. More than 60% of the Republicans won by bigger margins. Six years later, in 1922, after the successful battle against the League and when the nation was at peace, the Republicans lost 6 of their 16 seats (actually they lost 8 and gained 2), and Lodge received 47.6%, the lowest percentage of the vote of any surviving Republican.

The Senators who elected Lodge Majority Leader were those who had been appointed by the legislature. So, if American failure to ratify the League of Nations Treaty was one of the major causes of World War II, then delay in instituting popular election of the Senate and women's suffrage for the 20 or more years after they were first proposed can be counted as the domestic reasons. There are few foreign policy disasters whose cause can't be traced to domestic political roots.

Henry Cabot Lodge's great-grandfather, George Cabot, also held the same Class 1 Massachusetts Senate seat as his great-grandson and great-great-great grandson, from 1791 to 1796. George Cabot was a staunch Federalist. John Adams, the first president from Massachusetts, created the Navy Department and appointed George Cabot to be the first Secretary of the Navy. However, Cabot declined the appointment. Had he accepted, it might have gone a long way toward preventing the [War of 1812](#).

The War of 1812 was exceedingly unpopular in New England, especially among the Federalists. Although the south and southerners are roundly condemned for their attempt to secede from the union over the issue of slavery, the idea of secession was first raised by New England during the war of 1812.

Many of the rich Boston merchants whose livelihoods depended on trade with England were being driven into bankruptcy by the war. Anglophiles in the first place, the Federalists decided to call a convention and seek redress of their grievances. The Hartford, Connecticut, convention was called in 1814. The secrecy surrounding

it caused many to believe that its real purpose was to take New England out of the Union. George Cabot, Henry Cabot Lodge's great-grandfather, was the president of the Hartford Convention. Conceivably, he could have been the president of the new nation.

Luckily for the Cabots and the Lodges, but unluckily for the future of American foreign policy, the sudden and unexpected signing of the Treaty of Ghent which ended the War of 1812, prevented the Hartford Convention from completing their treasonous task of disunion. It was in opposition to this long, isolationist, anglophile Cabot and Lodge family tradition that the activist, internationalist, Irish Catholic John Kennedy came to the United States Senate, the body charged with overseeing the president's conduct of foreign policy.

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